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SPEECH BY AMBASSADOR JAMES F. MORIARTY AT CHITTAGONG PORT

CHITTAGONG, MAY 25 -- U.S. Ambassador James F. Moriarty made the following remarks at Chittagong Port on the occasion of Liberty Eagle Food Aid arrival today:

(Begin Text)

Assalamu alaykum, and good morning. I am pleased to be here in Chittagong and to visit the Chittagong port. Chittagong Port has a long history. Beginning in the 4th century, Chittagong received ships from the Middle East and China. Over the centuries, it has become a vibrant and increasingly busy port. This week, Chittagong Port received the Liberty Eagle. The Liberty Eagle flies the American flag and transports food shipments overseas as part of the U.S. Government's "Food for Peace" program. I am delighted today to announce that the Liberty Eagle transported 45,700 metric tons of wheat to Bangladesh as part of our food aid program.

The United States Government understands that food aid is crucial. Bangladesh has struggled recently through severe floods, a major cyclone, and increased prices for basic commodities. These challenges underscore the importance of a stable, affordable food supply for all citizens.

I firmly believe in the three most important goals of our bilateral partnership: strong democracy, sustainable development, and denial of space to terrorism. This current food aid promotes all three of these goals. Food security is critical for the social safety net. Affordable food allows families to invest in children's education for the future. Food on the family table allows families to resist influence from negative elements.

The American people are responding to the needs of Bangladesh. We have more than doubled the amount of food shipments this year to Bangladesh. In addition to the U.S. Government's regular food aid program, valued at \$48 million, an additional \$30 million in emergency food aid went to Cyclone Sidr-affected areas this year. In fact, part of the 45,700 metric tons of wheat just received will be used to assist Cyclone Sidr-affected populations in Barguna and Bagerhat districts. The rest will be distributed as part of USAID's ongoing food aid programs in flood prone and seasonally food insecure areas of the country. The food aid will be programmed through direct food distribution or food-for-

work and cash-for-work recovery programs. It will also be used in school feeding activities and nutritional interventions for pregnant and lactating mothers and their children.

The U.S Government's annual and ongoing food program in Bangladesh, administered through USAID, serves 3,500 remote and vulnerable villages in char, haor, and coastal regions. Food aid assistance is designed to bridge the gap between disaster response and development by supporting planning and preparedness activities. To date, we have helped build 245 multi-purpose disaster shelters, developed about 4,000 community-based disaster mitigation structures, and established a stockpile of emergency disaster kits for 30,000 families. We have trained local disaster committees, volunteers and school teachers in 271 of the country's 277 disaster-prone sub-districts. The program focuses on protection of assets by raising homesteads, building raised access roads to markets and schools, and developing alternate livelihood options for the ultra-poor through activities such as poultry, dairy, and vegetable farming. In all, program activities funded by the United States Government food aid program help 4 million people in those 3,500 villages.

Bangladesh has been an important ally and a friend to the United States for many years. The U.S. has a longstanding relationship with Bangladesh and has provided more than 5 billion U.S. dollars in aid since its independence. We plan to continue this strong bond of friendship and will work with the government of Bangladesh in helping it progress towards a more prosperous future.

I am happy to be here today to demonstrate my government's continuing commitment to Bangladesh. This latest food aid donation reflects the United States' friendship with the people of Bangladesh and our efforts to help the country achieve food security for all of its citizens.

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** As prepared for delivery*

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